

Over **one-half**
of the world's population lives
within **100 kilometres**
of the sea.



MEDIA RELEASE

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Pacific islands join forces to protect their coasts, economies, societies

Pacific island nations are facing critical environmental issues – pollution, habitat destruction, declining fisheries and climate change – which threaten their coastal ecosystems impacting food security and wellbeing.

Over the next two weeks, environmental leaders and managers are coming together in the Cook Islands to meet and discuss an innovative approach to the management of coastal ecosystems, known as ecosystem-based management, as part of a forum and training course. The two parallel events were jointly opened in Rarotonga yesterday by Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, the Honourable Jim Marurai.

Ecosystem-based management is an integrated management approach which addresses the ecological aspects of resource management within the social, economic and political context. It seeks solutions in which human and natural components are part of one sustainable system. The challenge is to manage coastal and marine lands and waters with a whole-of-government approach, rather than a sectoral approach, and incorporate traditional management structures and practices.

"We are seeking to combine the collective wisdom of leaders, managers and experts from across the Pacific so we can better manage and preserve the precious coastal resources that underpin the economies and societies of Pacific Island nations," said Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, Director of the Global Change, University of Queensland. "Given the rapid degradation of these important resources, this is a particularly critical issue."

The Pacific Leadership Forum (January 25-28) will focus on policy and planning for ecosystem-based management including:

- National environmental priorities of participating countries;
- The role and function of international conventions and policy in the Pacific;
- Implications of climate change and the way forward for Pacific nations; and
- Opportunities for international and regional collaboration and what can be done to support Pacific Island nations.

The Forum is led by the Global Change Institute at the University of Queensland, and the Center for Ocean Solutions at Stanford University, and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Research and Security (ANCORS).

The training course will equip participants with tools and information to implement effective ecosystem-based management in their home countries. It will integrate contemporary and traditional management practices in managing coastal environments in the Pacific. Participants will learn from a range of case studies, in particular what has been done to improve the health of the Cook Islands' Takitumu Lagoon. The course is supported by the Coral Reef Targeted Research and Capacity Building for Management (CRTR) Program, The University of Queensland, the Cook Islands Marine Resources Institutional Strengthening Project (CIMRIS), and United Nations Environment Program.

Countries participating include the Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Yap, Tonga, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, American Samoa, New Zealand, Australia and the USA.

Media information: Gabrielle Sheehan
Within the Cook Islands: 57995 / From overseas: +61 409 945 001